



# ADA COUNTY

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**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

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## **Mosquito Abatement Officials Unveil Aerial Spraying Plan**

(Boise, ID) – Today, Ada County Weed, Pest, and Mosquito Abatement officials unveiled their mosquito control plan as a follow up to Ada County's recent West Nile emergency declaration. A portion of the plan calls for aerial spraying over parts of Ada County where mosquitoes likely infected with the potentially deadly virus are most prevalent. With great concern for public health and safety, the Board of Ada County Commissioners last Thursday (August 10, 2006) declared a state of emergency as a result of the increasing number of positive human West Nile infections being reported in Ada County. The next day, Idaho Governor Jim Risch acknowledged Ada County's emergency declaration by signing a state disaster declaration for Ada County. This act allows the expenditure of state dollars to help fund Ada County's increased mosquito control measures. Just this week, the Governor's office issued another disaster declaration, this time for neighboring Canyon County, as a result of the current West Nile epidemic.

Weather permitting, aerial spraying over specific sections along the Boise River and other strategic locations in southwest Boise, will begin Monday evening (August 21, 2006) after sunset at approx. 9:00pm and will continue for approx. 4-hours, ending around 1:30am. The plan calls for a repeat spraying over the same 50,000 acres Tuesday evening (August 22, 2006). Aerial applications WILL NOT commence in conditions of rain or winds that exceed 10 miles per hour within the designated spray zone.

The Ada County Mosquito Abatement District will use the brand chemical Dibrom Concentrate during aerial spraying operations. This pesticide appears on the Idaho Department of Agriculture's approved pesticide list and will be applied according to the product label as

directed by state and federal law. As prescribed, Dibrom is not harmful to humans, pets, birds, or fish. Airplanes will spray the pesticide into droplets 30 microns in size approximately 300-feet above the ground. While this microscopic dose of pesticide is enough to kill mosquitoes, it is not expected to widely harm larger insects within the designated spray-zone. Officials say the pesticide is active for only a short period of time and will likely be inert by the time Ada County residents wake to start their day the next morning.

Ada County Weed, Pest, and Mosquito Abatement officials have supplied the aerial applicator with GPS data that will prevent pilots from spraying any pesticide over Ada County's four registered organic farm operations. In addition to the Hi-tech GPS computer controls, crews will also locate pesticide detection devices on the ground to further monitor and track the pesticide application. It is important to note that **NO** registered organic farms fall within a mile of the targeted spray zone. Additionally, Mosquito Abatement officials sent written notification to known local beekeepers about the aerial spraying operation. While the chemical guidelines indicate it will have no adverse impact on insects larger than mosquitoes, beekeepers may consider covering their hives during the spray operation if they are worried about the safety of their bees.

Local officials expect a 90% kill rate on adult mosquitoes within the spray zone. As a follow up to aerial spraying, Ada County Weed, Pest, and Mosquito Abatement workers will also increase their larvaciding efforts at area ponds and lakes to kill mosquito larva before they hatch into flying adults. This two-pronged approach will significantly impact the area's mosquito population; therefore greatly reducing the risk of any further human West Nile infection.

"This pesticide is widely used across the entire United States for the specific purpose of mosquito control," said Ada County Weed, Pest, and Mosquito Abatement Department Director Brian Wilbur. "It has been deemed safe and approved by all U.S. Governmental agencies. The aerial contractor selected to perform the spraying is a highly recommended applicator with all the required licenses and certifications to perform this type of work. The company performs similar operations in dozens of counties in at least 7-states each year. Following hurricane Katrina, the company sprayed approximately 2.5-million acres without incident."

Vector Disease Control (VDC), the company selected for Ada County's aerial spray operation, has been in business since 1992 and is headquartered in Florida with operations based in Greenville, Mississippi. Most recently, VDC successfully completed mosquito-spraying operations in Sacramento, California.

VDC has dispatched two twin-engine Piper Aztec airplanes to perform Ada County's mosquito control operation. Each plane will carry approximately 60-to-75 gallons of the pesticide, which is capable of covering approximately 10-15,000 acres. Each plane will land; refuel, and refill approximately 2-to-3 times during each evening's spray operation.

"Today, we're launching the first phase of a multi-part public education campaign about this aerial spraying plan," said Brian Wilbur. "For the next several days, we will be working with the local media to get the word out about this operation's goals and objectives. We will also work to demonstrate how the plan will be executed by providing full access to VDC employees who will explain and demonstrate how they will perform their mission."

The total cost of this aerial spraying operation in Ada County is estimated at \$175,000 or \$1.75 per acre. (Note about calculation: 100,000 acres total in Ada County - split into two applications over the same 50,000 acres on Monday and Tuesday evenings.) Governor Risch's disaster declaration for Ada County means the State of Idaho will pay 75% of the cost with Ada County picking up the remaining 25%.

According to guidelines established by the State of Idaho's Arbovirus Surveillance and Mosquito Control in Idaho Plan, West Nile infections have reached epidemic proportions in Ada County. To date, Idaho remains the state with the highest number of human West Nile infections in the entire United States. Currently, Ada County has 71-confirmed cases of West Nile virus in humans, 32-cases in horses, 23-cases in birds and 40-mosquito test pools that have returned positive for the virus.

**About the Ada County Weed, Pest, and Mosquito Abatement Department**

The Ada County Weed, Pest, and Mosquito Abatement Department is made up of approximately 40 to 50 employees who work daily to control the spread of noxious weeds, the proliferation of harmful pests, and outbreaks of virus carrying mosquitoes in Ada County.

The Ada County Mosquito Abatement District covers 406 square miles across Ada County and currently monitors and treats mosquito outbreaks at 1704 ponds, lakes, and rivers in Ada County.

## **West Nile Prevention Tips & Information**

To prevent favorable mosquito environments around your home and property:

- If you have a bird bath or decorative pond, change the water or clean it every 3-6 days
- Remove containers on your property that can collect water, such as old tires, children's toys or flower pots
- Repair or install screens on your home
- Clean your rain gutters and check for proper drainage around your home
- Make sure you don't over-water your lawn or landscaping and routinely check your yard or property for puddles of standing water

The West Nile virus can be more serious for people who are over the age of 50. You can protect yourself and your family from harmful mosquito bites by taking the following precautions:

- Wear long pants, long-sleeved shirts, and socks when outdoors
- Apply an EPA-approved insect repellent to exposed clothing or skin, following instructions on the product label. For the safety of children between the ages of 2-12 years, follow directions carefully. If using a repellent containing DEET, use one containing 10-percent or less.
- Ask your doctor or pediatrician about using repellent on children under the age of 2
- Mosquitoes can bite anytime, but are generally more active at dawn and dusk, so be extra careful at these times.